Containing Oil Pool Deficit

687. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Government toying with three options to contain oil bill", which appeared in the Pioneer of 29th October, 1996;

(b) what are the three options available to contain the oil pool deficit; and

(c) what is the decision of Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): a) to (c) The import bill depends on the consumption, indigenous production & prices of petroleum products & crude oil in the international market. Position of oil pool account is constantly monitored & measure taken from time to time, to contain the deficit. The refining capacity is also being increased in the country by expansion of existing refineries in the public sector and setting up of refineries in joint sector and private sector to minimise the product imports. Steps are being taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of proved technologies, better understanding of reservoir behaviour, development of new fields, additonal development of existing fields and by inviting foreign and private capital in the upstream sector.

Pooyamkutty Hydroelectric Project

88. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Environment and Forests had constituted an expert Committee to inspect the Pooyamkutty hydro-elctric project area in Kerala on the request of the State Government and a report was submitted by that Committee;

(b) if so, what is the present position regarding clearance to the project; and

(c) whether the right to evaluate the environmental aspects of a project is going to be given to the State Governments, as declined by the Prime Minister; if so, what is the position of Pooyamkutty and whether the State Government would be given right to decide whether to give clearance to it or not?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) and (b) The Pooyamkutty Hydroelectric Power Project in Kerala (2×120MW) was accorded techno-economic clearance by the Central Electicity Authority in 1984 at an estimated cost of Rs. 250 crores. The project was accorded environmental clearance in 1985 and investment approval by the Planning Commission in August, 1986 subject to the State Government's obtaining the forest clearance. The forest clearance for the project was rejected in 1991. Subsequently, on the request of State Government to reconsider the proposal, an Expert Committe was constituted in October, 1993 by the Minister of Environment & Forests for site inspection of the forest area involved. After examination of the report of the Committee, the forest clearance to the project was again rejected in June, 1996. Another Committe has been constituted in October, 1996 by the Ministry of Enviroment and Forests for indepth analysis of the Pooyamkutty Hydroelectric Project.

(c) Under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, the State Governments are required to obtain prior approval of the Central Government for diversion of forest land for non forest purposes.

Since the Ministry of Environment & Forests has already constituted an Expert Committee to re-consider the clearance of the Poovamkutty Hydroelectric Pro-